

MAKING CHILDREN OUR PRIORITY

HOW CANADA CAN DO BETTER FOR THE WORLD'S MOST VULNERABLE GIRLS & BOYS

WHITE PAPER SUMMARY



It has been 30 years since the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the global treaty that sets out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children. Since the establishment of this international agreement on childhood in 1989, and the subsequent adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by United Nations member states in 2015, progress has been made for many children living in poverty around the world. **But for most girls and boys living in fragile contexts, the story has not improved.**

Fragile contexts are the most dangerous places in the world to be a child. Girls and boys in these contexts face extreme levels of abuse, exploitation, deprivation and violence. They experience the highest levels of food insecurity, malnutrition, and mortality rates, and are nearly three times more likely to not be able to attend primary school than children in other low-income countries. These challenges perpetuate cycles of inequality, poverty and violence that can continue for generations. Without **urgent investment now in girls and boys living in fragile contexts**, these children and entire populations are at risk of falling even further behind—to the detriment of their own futures, as well as global wellbeing.

Canada's government has an opportunity: build on its Feminist International Assistance Policy by increasing its focus on the world's most vulnerable children in fragile contexts and contribute to **vital progress** in the lives of these children and their communities. The well-being of these girls and boys is crucial, not only for their own lives, but to long-term global peace, stability, and

sustainable development. These children need strong advocates who will invest in their futures. **Canada can be that advocate.** As an established champion of young people, Canada is well-positioned to move the global community forward with stronger, more targeted investment and programming for girls and boys in fragile contexts—an investment that addresses the roots of fragility and gender inequality and provides a much-needed pathway to peace and development.

World Vision is ready to partner with the Government of Canada in this mission. As one of the world's largest non-governmental organizations working across the humanitarian-peace-development nexus, we understand the urgency for new action, greater funding, and innovative approaches to programming in fragile contexts, with a focus on girls and boys. Our experience has taught us the best way to support children, families and communities in fragile contexts is to work with people to make sure they have the life-saving essentials they need to **survive**; rebuild and identify risks for the future as a way to recover and **adapt**; and increase the resilience of children and communities to build a better future where they can **thrive**.

We call on the Government of Canada to **place children and youth living in the world's most difficult places at the heart of its international assistance strategy.** Advancing the rights of girls and boys in fragile contexts will help them to be healthy, educated, protected, and fully participating in their communities.

To do this, Canada should prioritize the **participation of girls and boys** and ensure they are meaningfully consulted and

involved in all fragile context programming. Canada can also accomplish this by championing the **Youth, Peace and Security Agenda** globally and supporting children and youth as peacebuilders; by establishing a **Global Children's Advisory Council** to advise the Government on the different needs of girls and boys in fragile contexts; and by delivering on its promise to children in fragile contexts, many of whom are refugees and IDPs, by investing in access to the **safe quality education** they need and deserve.

World Vision is calling on Canada to **increase its investments** in children living in fragile contexts to at least 20% of total Canadian Official Development Assistance (ODA). We urge Canada and other global donors to take more thoughtful, planned risks when funding fragility, through flexible, multi-year funding and the use of **crisis modifiers**. World Vision is recommending all programming be rooted in a **gender-responsive framework**. We are asking Canada to convene a sector-wide dialogue on **faith and fragility** to further explore the role of faith actors in promoting the rights of children in fragile contexts.

The challenge of fragility won't be solved by Canada alone—but this is Canada's moment to **lead the global community** in the right direction.

As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and work together toward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Canada's government has an opportunity to be both **bold and ambitious**. It is time for Canada to embrace the challenge of fragility and bring hope to the girls and boys who are the hardest to reach—and who need us the most.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 The Government of Canada should place children and youth living in the world's most difficult places at the heart of its international assistance strategy in order to better advance the rights of girls and boys in fragile contexts to be healthy, educated, protected and participating in their communities.

To do so, the Government of Canada should:

- Prioritize the participation of children by ensuring the voices, priorities, and different needs of girls and boys are meaningfully included in all programming in fragile contexts.
- Deliver on its promise to children in fragile contexts, many of whom are refugees and IDPs, by investing in access to the safe quality education they need and deserve.
- Champion the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda internationally and increase Canadian funding to programming focused on children and youth as peacebuilders, particularly in fragile contexts.
- Establish a Global Children's Advisory Council that would ensure the perspectives and voices of children and youth from fragile contexts are considered in decisions affecting them.

2 The Government of Canada should increase its funding to children living in fragile contexts to at least 20% of total Canadian Official Development Assistance (ODA), including by increasing funding for children's protection, education, health and peacebuilding initiatives.

3 Global Affairs Canada should ensure its funding streams and strategies for fragility are predictable and increasingly provide flexible, multi-year funding.

4 Global Affairs Canada should include crisis modifiers more frequently in programming in fragile contexts to enhance resilience and protect development gains.

5 Global Affairs Canada should ensure all programming across the humanitarian-peace-development nexus is rooted in a gender-responsive framework, to better increase women's and girls' knowledge and realization of their rights and capacity to create opportunities for civic engagement.

6 Global Affairs Canada should convene a sector-wide dialogue on faith in fragility to discuss how to strengthen work around civic engagement and community development with faith actors in fragile contexts.

